

essentially means that one's "thoughts" or "feelings" might be evidence of hate, and can be considered when determining whether a crime was indeed a "hate" crime.

Let me say that again. The bill would ask law enforcement to consider one's potential "thoughts" as evidence of "hate."

Mr. Speaker, this is the dangerous, likely unconstitutional threat that has caused great concern to so many residents of Ohio's 4th Congressional District.

Upon consideration of this bill in the Judiciary Committee, Mr. Speaker, I sent you a letter, co-signed by many of my Republican colleagues on the committee. The letter expressed concern about H.R. 1592's "thought crime" provisions and their potential to categorize individuals who share spiritual or gospel messages as hate criminals.

In the letter, we noted that the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed Resolution 060356, which castigated Cardinal William Levada and the Catholic Church for opposing the adoption of children by homosexuals. The resolution, perhaps prophetically, describes the Church's policy using such words as "hateful," "discriminatory," "insulting," and "callous."

It is easy to see how this type of inflammatory anti-religious assertion emanating from a governmental body is disconcerting to those who espouse deep religious beliefs.

This so-called hate crimes bill not only discards the fundamental American legal principle of equal justice, it also lays the groundwork to criminalize individuals and groups that might not share the liberal values of places like San Francisco.

It is rather ironic that on this, the National Day of Prayer—a day where Americans gather to celebrate our religious heritage—liberal members of this House are uniting to pass a bill that could deem their prayerful voices as "hateful."

I urge a "no" vote on this bill.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007. I would like to thank the chief sponsor of this legislation, Congressman CONYERS, for his work and dedication in bringing this bipartisan bill to the floor for debate.

H.R. 1592 will strengthen existing Federal hate crimes laws in two meaningful ways. First, the bill removes the requirement that victims of violent bias-motivated crimes be engaged in a federally protected activity, such as voting, when the crime is committed. Federal entities would then be able to provide technical and grant support for the hate crimes investigations of State and local law enforcement agencies. Second, the bill provides for a more comprehensive definition of hate crimes to include those motivated by gender, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

In 2005, the FBI documented 7,163 hate crimes directed against institutions and individuals because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability. These statistics were gathered from 12,417 law enforcement agencies across the country. Yet it is not the frequency or number of crimes alone that distinguish these acts of violence from other crimes.

We know that hate crimes are more than individual assaults—they send shock waves and fear throughout a whole community and segments of our diverse population. Hate violence

is also a message crime and the messages are clear: "know your place" and "your kind is not welcome here." Hate crimes clearly pose a serious threat to our Nation's security and the very values upon which our country were founded.

As an original cosponsor of H.R. 1592, I urge my colleagues to vote in support of final passage.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007. Violent crimes committed against anyone because of their race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability should not be taken lightly. H.R. 1592 would make this kind of violent crime a Federal offense and authorizes Federal grants to assist state and local law enforcement agencies in prosecuting violent hate crimes.

I believe that it is necessary for the Federal Government to secure the lives of all people and bring justice to individuals who have been victims of a violent hate crime. By allowing the Federal Government jurisdiction in certain, limited cases of violent hate crime, this bill provides much-needed support to local law enforcement agencies. This piece of legislation is particularly important at a time when the number of hate groups has grown over the past years. The Southern Poverty Law Center reported that the number of hate groups has seen a 40 percent increase since 2000 and attributed much of this growth to the immigration issue.

Hate crimes that are motivated by bigotry and bias against minority populations affect entire families and communities. We must stand to protect our communities from hateful actions. I urge my colleagues to vote in support of H.R. 1592.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, while I was unavoidably absent from the floor today to attend the funeral of a close personal friend and great Georgian, C.W. Matthews, I want to express my strong opposition to H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007. Had I been present during the actual vote, I would have voted "no" to H.R. 1592 because I believe all crimes should be prosecuted equally without special rights based on gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. All criminal acts are committed with the intention of harming or depriving another individual, and trying to elevate crimes against certain individuals would be an arbitrary way to punish. I absolutely believe that those who commit crimes against anyone should be punished to the fullest extent of the law. Furthermore, I would have voted "yes" in strong support of the motion to recommit which would have amended the legislation to protect seniors and veterans.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act and to oppose attempts to weaken the bill by removing certain groups from its protection.

Mr. Speaker, no one knows better than a member of the African-American community in this country that hate crimes exist and have been an ugly part of this country's history. And we also know that in the face of all of the apologies offered and passed for slavery and lynching, if we cannot pass this bill today they are but empty words on a piece of worthless paper.

It is time for us to demand through this vote that this country draw the line with a zero-tolerance policy for crimes based on any characteristic of the victim.

This critically needed legislation will provide local police and sheriff's departments with vital Federal resources to address hate crimes; which are crimes against either persons or property where the offender intentionally selects the victim because of their actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

I fail to understand why anyone, including members of the clergy would oppose this legislation. This form of hate for one human being to another should be repugnant to all of us and not be tolerated.

While current Federal law covers hate crimes it is very narrow in scope and does not reach many cases where individuals motivated by hate kill or injure others. H.R. 1592, would strengthen the Federal response to hate crimes by giving the U.S. Justice Department power to investigate and prosecute violence motivated by the victims race color, religion national origin gender or sexual orientation, gender identity of disability.

Sadly, the need for H.R., 1592 is underscored because this problem of violence based on hate for a person of another race, ethnicity, gender or persuasion is getting worse not better. Since 1991, the FBI has received reports of more than 113,000 hate crimes. For the year 2005 (for which the most current data are available), the FBI received reports from law enforcement agencies identifying 7,163 bias-motivated criminal incidents.

It is time that this Congress send a message to the American people that we will not tolerate hate crimes, that they must strengthen the Federal response and prosecution of those who perpetrate them, that we uphold the principles of equality and justice for all upon which this country was founded and that we intend to practice what many of us preach; which is brotherly love.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1592.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007.

Simply put, the current patchwork of State laws alone does not fully protect the rights of all Americans from violence based upon actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. I am frankly astounded that current Federal laws are not more inclusive.

It is unconscionable that we are only now voting on this legislation today. Almost 150 years after our country enshrined the freedom from violence based upon race, with the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, we still have not extended those same protections to all of our citizens. Today, this body has the chance and indeed the responsibility to rectify this injustice.

Hate knows no borders, so even though 38 states already provide some of the protections that would be extended by Federal law if H.R. 1592 is enacted, only a Federal law can ensure equal protection under the law for all Americans.

Remarkably, this legislation faces opposition. Those opponents have claimed that H.R. 1592 is somehow an attack on free speech or a person's religious beliefs. H.R. 1592 does not criminalize freedom of speech or religious